

SIX RAND EXPERTS SUPPORT PULLOUT

Back Unilateral Step Within
One Year in Vietnam

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SANTA MONICA, Calif., Oct. 8 — Six staff members of the Rand Corporation, all of whom have done research on Vietnam for the Federal Government, have urged the United States to make a unilateral withdrawal of its troops from South Vietnam within a year.

In a letter to The New York Times, the six said, "Such disengagement should not be conditioned upon agreement or performance by Hanoi or Saigon — i.e., it should not be subject to veto by either side."

The six said that they were acting as individuals, not as employees of Rand, a nonprofit research corporation established by the Air Force in 1946. The corporation is now independent but still does 76 per cent of its work for the Defense Department.

The letter, written by men of considerable expertise who normally shun publicity, provided new impetus to the growing public demand for swift disengagement from Vietnam.

Two Years in Saigon

Under contract to the Pentagon, the six have studied subjects ranging from the effectiveness of bombing North Vietnam to the interrogation of enemy prisoners. One of them, Daniel Ellsberg, spent two years working for the State Department in Saigon before joining Rand.

The group includes experts on Russia, China and Japan. One signatory, Melvin Gurtov, is the author of a forthcoming book on the future of American policy in southeast Asia. The other signers are Oleg Hoeffding, Arnold L. Horelick, Konrad Kellen and Paul F. Langer.

The letter writers concluded that negotiations could never bring peace to Vietnam and that an unconditional pullout was the only feasible alternative open to Washington. As one of the group commented: "Unilateral withdrawal is now respectable."

The letter listed four reasons, "apart from persuasive moral argument," for rapid American withdrawal:

"No. 1. Short of destroying the entire country and its people, we cannot eliminate the enemy forces in Vietnam by military means; in fact, military victory is no longer the U.S. objective. What should now also be recognized is that the opposing leadership cannot be coerced by the present or by any other available U.S. strategy into making the kinds of concessions currently demanded."

Exaggeration Is Found

"No. 2. Past U. S. promises to the Vietnamese people are not served by prolonging our inconclusive and highly destructive military activity in Vietnam. This activity must not be prolonged merely on demand of the Saigon government, whose capacity to survive on its own must finally be tested, regardless of outcome."

"No. 3. The importance to the U. S. national interests of the future political complexion of South Vietnam has been greatly exaggerated, as has the negative international impact of the unilateral U. S. military withdrawal."

"No. 4. Above all, the human, political and material costs of continuing our part in the war far outweigh any prospective benefits, and are greater than the foreseeable costs and risks of disengagement."

Disaster Is Denied

The North Vietnamese, the letter continued, have shown extraordinary "resiliency, determination and effectiveness, even under extremely adverse conditions." Any hope that the enemy is weakening is "erroneous," it went on.

Moreover, the letter said, the North Vietnamese would never accept a settlement that "implied recognition of the authority of the Saigon government."

"Thus to make the end of U. S. involvement contingent upon such concessions is to perpetuate our presence indefinitely," it declared.

Unilateral withdrawal, the letter insisted, would not necessarily have the disastrous consequences predicted by supporters of American policy. Withdrawal could even produce "desirable political changes in Saigon" by eliminating support for a regime not backed by a majority of South Vietnamese and by allowing a "cohesive national consensus" to emerge.

The theory that a massive military effort in Vietnam would prevent "proxy victories" by the Soviet Union or Communist China "has long since been discredited," the letter added.

"Moreover, we regard the Vietnamese insurgency as having special characteristics that cannot be considered typical of or exerting decisive influence on other revolutionary movements in Asia or elsewhere," the letter said.

"We do not predict that only good consequences will follow for Southeast Asia or South Vietnam (or even the United States) from our withdrawal," it declared. "What we do say is that the risks will not be less after another year or more of American involvement, and the human costs will surely be greater."